

I am glad to see that today's resolution encouraged the formation of a two-state solution through the process of direct negotiations. I am also glad to see that it acknowledges the work that President Obama has done to try and ward off unilateral attempts to break out of the negotiating process. This resolution also importantly notes the violent and harmful actions of Hamas.

Yet I am disappointed that the resolution specifically criticizes the Palestinians for their actions but does not acknowledge that the Israeli government has also not always moved productively toward peace—in particular, through the ongoing construction of new settlements in the West Bank.

Furthermore, the truth of the matter is that the failure of the peace talks has provided the opening for an alliance between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas and, in their view, a reason for them to go before the United Nations, rather than continue direct talks. I support the continuation of direct talks and do not believe this issue should be resolved before the U.N. But make no mistake that the failure to achieve sufficient progress in talks has provided momentum to this latest effort to seek the U.N.'s involvement. That is all the more reason why Congress should prioritize real progress over political games.

I am further disappointed that the resolution misstates U.S. law, incorrectly claiming that current law precludes the United States from providing aid to the Palestinian Authority if it agrees to share power with Hamas. Current law rightfully provides an exception to the prohibition in order to enhance border security and the peace process.

In addition, I do not believe it would be beneficial to cut off aid to the Palestinian Authority. This aid provides Fatah with negotiating leverage among their fellow Palestinians against Hamas. Security experts, including Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak and others, have warned against such a cutoff, since it could destabilize the security situation on the West Bank. Fortunately, the language of the resolution only asks that the Administration consider withholding such aid, yet this is still unwise.

Congress could—and Congress should—take the peace process in the Middle East more seriously than it has with this resolution and similar resolutions before it.

#### OUR UNCONSCIONABLE NATIONAL DEBT

#### HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 7, 2011

Mr. COFFMAN of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, today our national debt is \$14,343,021,848,987.23.

On January 6th, 2009, the start of the 111th Congress, the national debt was \$10,638,425,746,293.80.

This means the national debt has increased by \$3,704,596,102,693.43 since then.

This debt and its interest payments we are passing to our children and all future Americans.

#### ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA LETTER CARRIERS LEAD NATION IN COLLECTION OF FOOD

#### HON. C.W. BILL YOUNG

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 7, 2011

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, for the third time in five years, the men and women of the National Association of Letter Carriers Branch 1477 of St. Petersburg, Florida, led the Nation in food collection as part of the national "Stamp Out Hunger" food drive.

Their chapter alone collected an astounding 1,770,814 pounds of food that has been distributed to Pinellas County food banks, pantries and shelters, many of which are affiliated with Feeding America. St. Petersburg Branch 1477, combined with another local branch, Tampa 599, collected 3,500,196 pounds, more food than in any other geographic area in the Nation. In fact, these two chapters accounted for two of the top five branch totals nationally.

Having spent time with many members of Branch 1477, I know of the great pride they have in serving our community. They acknowledge that the "Stamp Out Hunger" food drive is an outstanding partnership between the National Association of Letter Carriers, the United States Postal Services, the American Postal Workers Union, the National Rural Letter Carrier's Association, Campbell's Soup Company, United Way Worldwide, AFL-CIO, and local businesses including Uncle Bob's Self Storage and Valpak, a major sponsor in my area. Most importantly though, the level of success of this annual drive is due to the compassion and support of the residents of our local communities who place bag after bag of food out at their mail box on this one day of the year to lend a helping hand to their neighbors in need.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in thanking the National Association of Letter Carriers for taking the initiative to sponsor the "Stamp Out Hunger" program for these past 19 years and in congratulating the letter carriers of Branch 1477 who serve from Dunedin through Largo, Pinellas Park, St. Petersburg and south to Punta Gorda, Florida, for once again topping the Nation in the collection of food. This program is in the finest American tradition of neighbor helping neighbor.

#### HONORING LOUIS AND SUSANNA HAGER AS CO-CHAIRS OF THE OTSEGO COUNTY CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

#### HON. RICHARD L. HANNA

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 7, 2011

Mr. HANNA. Mr. Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Louis and Susanna Busch Hager,

co-chairs of the Otsego County Conservation Association, serving as long-time stewards of Otsego Lake. The Hagers are dedicated to the preservation of our most precious natural resources, particularly Otsego Lake in Coopers-town, New York.

Mr. and Mrs. Hager have played a vital role in supporting community education regarding the challenging present issues surrounding development and maintenance of healthy lakes. They have also generously supported numerous environmental campaigns and programs, most notably the Otsego Lake Challenge Campaign.

It is with great honor that I rise today to commend the Hagers for their tremendously positive impact on our community and its future. They are being honored tonight for working tirelessly and devoting countless volunteer hours to the Otsego County Conservation Association and other community organizations. Through their significant philanthropic contributions, future generations can have hope for a clean and healthy living environment.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Louis and Susanna Busch Hager for their invaluable contribution to this community, our environment and our future. The positive results of their contribution will be noted for generations to come.

#### REAFFIRMING COMMITMENT TO NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT OF ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

SPEECH OF

#### HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 6, 2011

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my concern that H. Res. 268 threatens Palestinians with sanctions if they attempt to get UN membership this fall. This resolution, which addresses the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, unfairly demands more of the Palestinians than it does of Israel. The United States cannot be a force for peace by unfairly singling out one party and ignoring the faults of another. While the United States concerns about Hamas's inclusion in the Palestinian unity government are valid, we should not prematurely pull the rug underneath the feet of the Palestinian unity government.

In an effort to achieve peace, the United States must hold both Israeli and Palestinian decision-makers accountable for upholding past agreements and negotiating a new one. I urge my colleagues to support more balanced policies and actions that seek a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

As our country continues to help move the peace process forward, I remain committed to preserving the peace negotiations between all parties. I will continue to work with the Administration in honoring our commitment to a peaceful resolution in the Middle East.